

*Washington DC - A New York Times article entitled "Regulation Is Lax for Water From Gas Wells" revealed that toxic wastewater byproducts of hydraulic fracturing, a drilling technique used to obtain natural gas, can contain radioactive contaminants at levels hundreds or even thousands of times the maximum allowed by federal standards for drinking water. In reaction, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) released the following statement.*

*Hinchey co-authored the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals (FRAC) Act to eliminate the so-called 2005 Halliburton exemption, which prevents the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating fracking through the Safe Drinking Water Act. The legislation would also require the disclosure of chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process. Hinchey is also the author of language that initiated an ongoing EPA study to determine the environmental impacts of the drilling technique.*

"The news that radioactive waste from the hydraulic fracturing process is being sent through wastewater treatment plants unequipped to handle it and then dumped into rivers and streams that supply drinking water to millions of people is alarming and must be immediately addressed. This story shows that the risks associated with this drilling technique are far too unknown and the current regulatory framework is far too limited to protect drinking water and the general public.

"Congress must take action to untie the hands of the Environmental Protection Agency, allowing it to assert proper oversight of the full life-cycle of the hydraulic fracturing process by repealing the egregious exemptions that this industry enjoys from our nation's most important environmental safeguards. I will be introducing legislation in the near future to do just that.

"The EPA should immediately begin requiring states to monitor radioactivity levels at all drinking water intakes that are in close proximity to sewage treatment plants that accept natural gas drilling wastewater.

"We can't afford to take the 'wait and see' approach when it comes to radioactive, carcinogenic materials contaminating drinking water. Now is the time for all those who care about the safety of America's drinking water supplies to step up to the plate and protect it for future generations."